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General Debate 3 (a): Actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development at the global, regional and national levels

3 (b): Sustainable cities, human mobility and international migration

Statement submitted by International Federation for Family Development, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council[2]

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[1] E/CN.9/2018/1.
[2] The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

The role of families in the new urban agenda

According to the World Bank, today's urban population of about 3.5 billion people is projected to reach 5 billion by 2030, with two-thirds of the global population living in cities. City leaders must move quickly to plan for growth. The speed and scale of urbanization brings challenges for all family members such as children, parents, youth, persons with disabilities and older persons. The capacity to tackle challenges is essential to assure a safe growth of all family members that live in the city. Some suggested relevant areas for it should promote affordable housing; well-connected transport systems; meeting accelerated demand for infrastructure and built environment; ratio of the available land, urban development focused in nucleus family needs, urban growth designed for persons with disabilities, respect and social inclusion; access to community support and health services; communication and information; as well as civil participation; jobs and opportunities, particularly for the nearly 1 billion urban poor who live in informal settlements.

At the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit on 25 September 2015, more than 150 world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals. The entire United Nations system, including the United Nations Development Programme will support governments around the world in tackling the new agenda and taking it forward over the next 15 years. Furthermore, the Sustainable Development Goals include a dedicated goal for urban development, SDG11, which calls to "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable".

A year later, at the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development — Habitat III, member states signed the New Urban Agenda. This is an action-oriented document which sets global standards of achieving SDG11, rethinking the way we build, manage, and live in cities. It acknowledges that while most of the global population and capital goods are concentrated in cities, urban areas remain crucial to social development, economic prosperity and poverty eradication. They drive most of the economic growth and are a source of innovation, facing sanitation and security challenges while acting as cultural centres. Achievements in eradicating poverty among developing countries are partly recognized to be related to the considerable progress in economic growth performance in the past two decades as well as gains in education and health, and the provision of social protection.

UN-Habitat is the United Nations programme working towards a better urban future. Its mission is to promote socially and environmentally sustainable human settlements and the achievement of adequate shelter for all.

In October 2016, at the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development — Habitat III, member states signed the New Urban Agenda. This is an action-oriented document which sets global standards of achievement in sustainable urban development, rethinking the way we build, manage, and live in cities. Through drawing together cooperation with committed partners, relevant stakeholders, and urban actors, including at all levels of government as well as the private sector, UN-Habitat is applying its technical expertise, normative work and capacity development to implement the New Urban Agenda and SDG11.

To ensure that no one is left behind in the New Urban Agenda, strategies that have proven to be effective and measurable need to be taken. Modern cities need to be resilient and their "urban strength" be evaluated. Only a holistic approach to evaluate the progress of cities can provide a complete picture of the city's vigour. A dialogue among stakeholders is equally important; any effort aimed at facilitating it

among government, civil society, residents, and the private sector about risks and the performance of urban systems is a worthwhile cause. With an accurate assessment, priority actions and investments can be identified, as well as strengthening resilience for planned or aspirational projects.

Some other goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development focus on topics that are directly related to families — ending poverty, promoting shared economic prosperity, social development and people's well-being — while protecting the environment. In all of them, families remain at the centre of social life ensuring the well-being of their members, educating and socializing children and youth and caring for young and old people. In particular, family-oriented policies can contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 1 to 5 related to ending poverty and hunger; ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all ages; ensuring educational opportunities throughout the lifespan and achieving gender equality.

In other words, there is no better holistic approach than a family perspective. The family unit has proven to be the main agent for development within societies and thus the cornerstone for sustainable cities. If families are these crucial development agents, an adequate environment is needed to facilitate their role. An adequate integrated approach that encourages cross-sectorial collaboration is more efficient when tackling existing issues and unlocking opportunities within the city.

A holistic approach to the family will contribute to three distinct aspects of sustainable development, and will make possible an accurate assessment of the needs for inclusive cities, especially in terms of investment in infrastructure. In order to achieve this objective, families may need to be provided with adequate tools for strengthening their ability to reach their potential as productive, engaged, and capable agents of sustainable development, contributing fully to their members and communities. Sustainable cities start and end with cohesive and inclusive families. Building cities that "work" — inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable — requires intensive policy coordination and investment choices. National and local governments have a key role to play to take action now, to shape the future of their development and to create opportunities for all, so that no one will be left behind.

The global project on Inclusive Cities and Sustainable Families that the International Federation for Family Development has promoted, represents a global alliance of cities, that aims to be inclusive of sustainable families by being responsive to their needs, according to goals 1 to 5 of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

The global alliance will present reviews on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals once a year, according to the agreed metrics in regional expert groups meetings and in the conference organized annually to share good practices. The International Federation for Family Development will also be committed to suggest that new cities be part of the Alliance; to co-ordinate the organization of the annual conference; to guarantee the co-ordination with UN departments and agencies, as well as the yearly presentation of the results during a side-event in the margins of the Commission on Population and Development at UN-Headquarters; to disseminate the key findings and policy recommendations worldwide.

In February 2017, during the 55th session of the Commission for Social Development, the Federation and the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, organized a high-level side-event in the form of a panel discussion with national, regional and local authorities to discuss the main objectives of the project. The side-event's interventions focused on strategies to eradicate poverty through a family perspective while following-up the New Urban Agenda.

On 31 October 2017, during the World Cities Day, the Regional Council of Veneto, working together with the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Federation, officially presented the Inclusive Cities and Sustainable Families project. The discussion focused on urban centres that will face key challenges in ensuring that the needs of people living in hardship are met. As cities become "smart", they must also provide equal access to the benefits of technological progress for vulnerable social groups and leave no one behind. Innovation can be a catalyst for change and ensure that cities and families are resilient. As part of the expert discussion series, the event served as a platform for experts to share their knowledge and identify solutions to the challenges "smart" cities will face in offering accessible infrastructure, services and information.

It is important to acknowledge the contributions of national governments, as well as the contributions of sub-national and local governments, in the definition of the New Urban Agenda. The New Urban Agenda reaffirms the Federation's global commitment to sustainable urban development as a critical step for realizing sustainable development in an integrated and coordinated manner at global, regional, national, sub-national, and local levels, with the participation of all relevant actors. On 21 November 2017, the first sub-national expert group meeting took place in Venice, Italy under the auspices of the President of the Regional Council of Veneto. The meeting aimed to set the evaluating items, define its content, and design evaluation process.

By being involved in all of these activities, the International Federation for Family Development is following-up to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and its contribution to the implementation and localization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in an integrated manner, and to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets, including SDG11, making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, sustainable and with a family perspective.